

## INTRODUCTION

By the time I was in my late teens and already a hardened science fiction reader, I had read many robot stories and found that they fell into two classes.

In the first class there was Robot-as-Menace. I don't have to explain that overmuch. Such stories were a mixture of "clank-clank" and "aargh" and "There are some things man was not meant to know." After a while, they palled dreadfully and I couldn't stand them.

In the second class (a much smaller one) there was Robot-as-Pathos. In such stories the robots were lovable and were usually put upon by cruel human beings. These charmed me. In late 1938 two such stories hit the stands that particularly impressed me. One was a short story by Eando Binder entitled "I, Robot," about a saintly robot named Adam Link; another was a story by Lester del Rey, entitled "Helen O'Loy," that touched me with its portrayal of a robot that was everything a loyal wife should be.

When, therefore, on June 10, 1939 (yes, I do keep meticulous records), I sat down to write my first robot story, there was no question that I fully intended to write a Robot-as-Pathos story. I wrote "Robot-bie," about a robot nurse and a little girl and love and a prejudiced mother and a weak father and a broken heart and a tearful reunion. (It originally appeared under the title—one I hated—of "Strange Playfellow.")

But something odd happened as I wrote this first story. I managed